

## Hobbies

# Most error coins reap small returns on the hobby market

By Roger Boye

**T**his week's column answers a stocking full of questions from Chicago Tribune readers.

**Q**—What's the investment potential of coins with faulty designs? Are any worth big money? We found two pennies without the "E" in "E Pluribus Unum."  
**J. G., Chicago**

**A**—Most "error coins"—such as your Lincoln cents—bring just small premiums on the hobby market. Few people collect such items, which tempers price advances.

The error kingpins include 1955 and 1972 Lincolns with duo lettering on the "heads sides" and the 1983 with doubling on the "tails side." All

three types in uncirculated condition retail for at least \$100 each, but they are the exceptions.

**Q**—We'd like to sell several 1981 and 1982 proof sets, but a local coin shop won't pay us more than \$5.75 per set. We bought them directly from the United States Mint for \$11 each. How can a dealer offer us less than the official government price?  
**H. F., Chicago**

**A**—Dealers will pay only what the market will bear; a "government issue price" often has little relation to a set's resale value. Unfortunately for you, the supply of 1981 and 1982 proof sets on the hobby market greatly exceeds demand. Uncle Sam made more than 3.8 million of each

set.

**Q**—Would I be better off buying two half-ounce American Eagles or one one-ounce coin? Is there a difference in the gold purity?  
**H. B., Oak Forest**

**A**—Both types are 91.67 percent pure, which is 22-karat gold. You'd save about \$10 in production fees and commissions by buying the one-ounce coin.

**Q**—Why are so many dollar bills dated 1985? I have yet to find any from 1986 or 1987.  
**B. N., Evanston**

**A**—Under Reagan Administration practice, the "series year" changes after a new Treasury secretary has taken office. James A. Baker has been secretary since February 1985; "series 1985"

Federal Reserve notes are current.

**Q**—I paid \$3,700 for 10 South African Krugerrands in 1984. Now I'm told it's illegal to own such coins. What can I do to recoup my investment? Is there a "black market"?  
**E. W., Chicago**

**A**—Federal law prohibits the importation of Krugerrands, but coins already in the country still

can be traded. Call some local coin dealers for price quotes.

**Q**—Are any John F. Kennedy half dollars made with silver?  
**W. A., Arlington Heights**

**A**—Yes. Kennedy halves dated 1964 each contain .36 of an ounce of silver, worth about \$2.50 at current precious metal prices. Any specimen dated 1965 to 1970 holds .15 of an ounce of silver (worth about \$1).